

Message Text

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PAGE 01 BEIRUT 04810 190831Z
ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-05 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 ACDA-12
AID-05 L-03 H-01 SP-02 COME-00 DODE-00 DOTE-00
EB-08 FMC-01 CG-00 DLOS-09 OES-09 /076 W
-----056496 200830Z /10

R 190754Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9308
INFO AMCONSUL ALEXANDRIA
AMEMBASSY CAIRO
AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
SECDEF WASHDC

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EWWT, MASS, LE
SUBJECT: BEIRUT PORT OPENS, CLOSES AUGUST 18

REF: (A) BEIRUT 4809, (B) ALEXANDRIA 0708

1. EMBOFFS VISITED BEIRUT PORT 1115 HOURS AUGUST 18.
ALTHOUGH PORT WAS OPEN, IT SHOWED LITTLE SIGN OF
ACTIVITY: ALMOST NO WORKERS, ONLY TWO OR THREE TRUCKS
MOVING. AREA THROUGHOUT WAS CLEAN WITH EXCEPTION MAIN
USAID-BUILT WAREHOUSE (STRUCTURE POSITION 3 ON QAY
NUMBER 6), STEEL SKELETON OF WHICH COLLAPSED INWARD
AND PARTIALLY MELTED IN HEAT OF FIRES WHICH CONSUMED
CONTENTS NIGHT OF JULY 2-3. BUILDING IS 95 PERCENT
DESTROYED; ONLY 30-40 FEET OF WEST END ROOF AND WALLS
REMAIN INTACT. THREE OTHER USAID WAREHOUSES, GRAIN ELEVATOR,
AND UNFINISHED FINNISH WAREHOUSES ON MOLE 3 UNDAMAGED. PORT
AUTHORITY AND CUSTOMS OFFICES SHOWED DAMAGE TO UPPER FLOORS.
TWO SHIPS WERE MOORED INSIDE BREADWATER, ONE THE CONCORDIA
FJORD WHICH WAS STRUCK BY FIRE AT OR NEAR QUAY 3 (JUDGED BY
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NEWS PHOTOS) NIGHT OF JULY 2-3. EVIDENCE OF FIRE IN SUPER-
STRUCTURE REMAINS; OTHERWISE CONCORDIA APPEARED NORMAL.
ALL PORT BASINS WERE EMPTY OF SHIPS. STYLIZED CEDAR TREE
INSIGNIA OF PHALANGE AND WORDS "PHALANGISTE LIBANAIS" WERE
PAINTED PROMINENTLY ON BREAKWATER, LIKEWISE ON SEVERAL
BUILDINGS INCLUDING WALL OF DESTROYED USAID WAREHOUSE.

2. SECURITY: SYRIAN CHECKPOINTS CONTROLLED WESTERN APPROACH TO PORT AREA AS FAR AS RUE ALLENBY. EAST OF RUE ALLENBY, LEBANESE POLICE (FSI) WERE PRESENT. PORT GATE ITSELF PROTECTED BY LAF SECURITY FORCE SOLDIERS WITH ONE M-113A1 APC. NO LAF FORCES WERE SEEN PATROLLING ELSEWHERE INSIDE THE PORT.

3. IMMEDIATELY FOLLOWING EMBOFFS' RETURN TO EMBASSY, IT WAS REPORTED THAT AN INCIDENT, INCLUDING MACHINE GUN FIRING INTO PORT, HAD OCCURRED APPROXIMATELY 1030 HOURS. THIS WAS FOLLOWED BY SY REPORTS THAT "A ROCKET" HAD LANDED IN PORT, WOUNDING FOUR WORKERS WHO WERE ADMITTED TO AMERICAN UNIVERSITY HOSPITAL. THEIR WOUNDS EVIDENTLY LIGHT AS ALL HAD BEEN RELEASED BY 1615 HOURS. THIRD VARIANT OF STORY CARRIED IN MORNING PRESS REPORTS AUGUST 19 THAT TWO ROCKET-PROPELLED GRENADES STRUCK PORT BEFORE 1000 HOURS, INJURING SIX. SUBSEQUENT ADF COMMUNIQUE STATED THAT PROJECTILES HAD RANGE OF 400 METERS AND CAME FROM EAST OF THE PORT; I.E., FROM DIRECTION KNOWN CHRISTIAN POSITIONS. CAMILLE CHAMOUN IN RIPOSTE BLAMED INCIDENT ON ADF.

4. COMMENT: DETAILS OF INCIDENT REMAIN UNCLEAR, BUT PORT IS EFFECTIVELY CLOSED AGAIN. LOGIC POINTS MORE STRONGLY TO CHRISTIAN MILITIAMEN AS PERPETRATORS THAN TO ADF SYRIANS, SINCE LATTER DRAW NO APPARENT BENEFIT FROM PORT CLOSURE IN THEIR STRUGGLE AGAINST MILITIAS WHEREAS MILITIAS CAN APPLY SEVERE ECONOMIC PRESSURE AGAINST GOL AS PART OF THEIR EFFORT TO FORCE COM-

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PROMISE ON SYRIAN ADF DISPOSITIONS IN EAST BEIRUT. PROJECTILES MAY TURN OUT TO HAVE BEEN RIFLE-LAUNCHED GRENADES OF TYPE APPARENTLY USED AUGUST 1 TO PREVENT INITIAL ATTEMPT REOPEN PORT. ON TIMING, WE CONCLUDE INCIDENT OCCURRED BETWEEN EMBASSY SECURITY CHECK ON PORT CONDITIONS AT 0955 HOURS AND EMBOFF VISIT 80 MINUTES LATER.

DECON 12/31/79.
KINSOLVING

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Message Attributes

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Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 19 aug 1978
Decaption Date: 01 jan 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
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